Sophomore spunk

***The Education of Shelby Knox (NR)**

Tuesday, June 21, 10 p.m., Rocky Mountain PBS, P.O.V. Series

"Life in Lubbock, Texas, taught me two things: One is that God loves you, and you're going to burn in hell. The other is that sex is the most awful, filthy thing on Earth, and you should save it for someone you love."

This quote, from Flatlanders guitarist Butch Hancock, formerly of Lubbock, opens the stirring *The Education of Shelby Knox*. Winner of the cinematography prize at Sundance last year, the documentary now is scheduled for broadcast on PBS stations across the nation on Tuesday, June 21.

When the film's heroine, Shelby Knox, was a 15-year-old sophomore at Lubbock's Coronado High School, filmmakers Rose Rosenblatt and Marion Lipschutz of New York City came to town to document the Lubbock Youth Commission's campaign to change sex education in the public schools.

Though Lubbock teenagers had some of the highest pregnancy and STD rates in the state of Texas, sex education in the schools was left to pastor and motivational speaker Ed Ainsworth, who preached only abstinence, with decidedly religious fervor.

When Lipschutz and Rosenblatt met the dynamic Ms. Knox, a commission member, they knew they'd found the person who would make a sex education documentary dramatic enough to sustain audience interest. Shelby was from a conservative Southern Baptist family and even had taken the "True Love Waits" vow of abstinence until marriage. But she was deeply involved in the campaign to bring more facts about sex, responsibility and accountability into the schools.

As she moved through high school, Shelby remained committed to the issue and, by senior year, expanded her social conscience to include gay kids who wanted to form a gay-straight alliance in perhaps the reddest town in one of the country's reddest states.

Shelby, a curly-haired all-American girl whose dream had been to appear in *Phantom of the Opera* on Broadway, became politicized through struggle and debate, right before the eyes of the filmmakers, her parents and her peers.

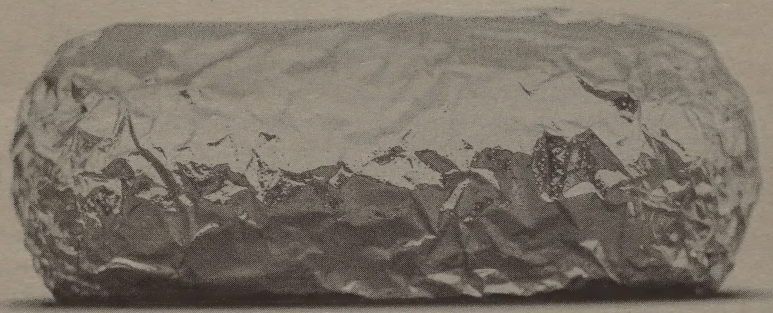
That this documentary is effective and entertaining at the same time is no accident. Rosenblatt and Lipschutz made good decisions about how to frame the story, making the political personal, and they struck gold in Shelby and her parents. The candid scenes in which Shelby and her mom and dad discuss her activism and their differences are pure examples of that quantity the morality police have been jamming down America's collective throat for the past few years: family values.

Shelby's unrelenting energy moves the film forward at a healthy pace, and the complexities of the sex education debate are effectively presented in several scenes, including one in which Shelby sits down to discuss her mission and her beliefs with Reverend Ed (sometimes referred to as "Sex Ed"). As he maintains his stance while patronizing Shelby and refusing to address the reality of teen sexual activity, she politely poses questions and raises doubts. The end result is that she comes off as the tougher thinker of the two and the one whose moral stance is harder-won, though the filmmakers carefully avoid taking sides.

Shelby Knox (pictured with her parents) campaigned to include sex education in public schools.

The Education of Shelby Knox is particularly pertinent in Colorado Springs, where debates over sex education and a gay-straight alliance have rocked the city's oldest high school in the past year. It's well worth looking at the subject through the eyes of a bright, involved young person like Shelby Knox.

— ***Kathryn Eastburn***



GOOD STUFF. TASTES GOOD.
GO FIGURE.

Chipotle

HAPPY COINCIDENCE.
BROADMOOR TOWNE CENTER